Continuous
News Service
Since 1881

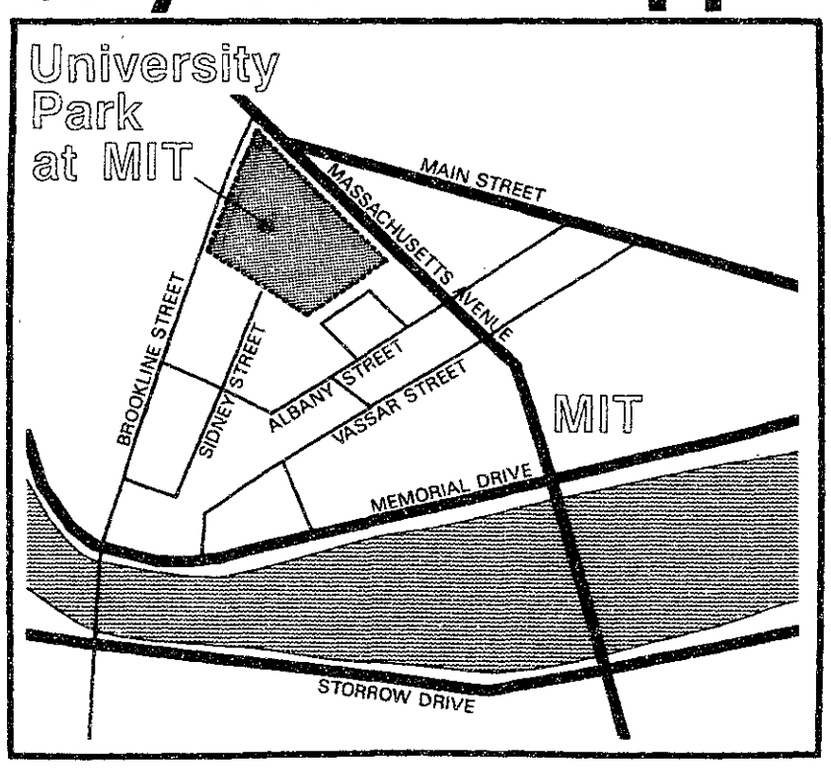
Volume 107, Number 58

The Tech

MIT
Cambridge
Massachusetts

Wednesday, January 13, 1988

City Council approves zoning plan for Simplex



MIT begins 10-year University Park development

By Earl C. Yen

The Cambridge City Council approved MIT's re-zoning petition for the 27-acre Simplex property Monday night, ending 19 years of uncertainty over the future of the Institute's undeveloped land north of the main campus.

MIT will now proceed with its plan to develop a $250 million "University Park," which will include retail space, research and development offices, a hotel, open public space, and housing. The Simplex site is one-fifth the area of MIT's main campus.

MIT spokesman Walter L. Milne said the re-zoning will finally allow the Institute to change the site from a "desolated, deteriorated area" into a lively environment that will benefit the MIT community as well as Cambridge residents. The size of University Park will be comparable to Kendall Square, although University Park will have a greater variety of uses, Milne said.

The controversial petition passed by a 7-2 margin after a marathon six-hour City Council meeting attended by over 100 Cambridgeport residents, most of whom opposed MIT's planned development and fought the petition.

The final vote disappointed many Cambridgeport residents who had sought a Simplex development that met more of the neighboring community's needs. MIT's plan drew fire from many residents who feared that the development would destroy surrounding neighborhoods and would bring large amounts of outside traffic to the area. Opponents of the MIT plan also felt that University Park was planned as an excessively large commercial development, neglecting the housing needs of the community.

"This was a missed opportunity for the City Council to get more housing targeted for the most needy in the community," said William Cavellini, spokesman for the Simplex Steering Committee, a group of Cambridgeport residents who opposed MIT's planned development. The final plan does not require MIT to build housing for the neediest tenants, including the homeless, Cavellini argued.

The zoning plan approved by the Council includes the following items:

- An agreement that MIT will construct 400 residential units, including 100 units of low income housing and 50 units of medium income housing. The ordinance includes a timetable linking MIT's residential and non-residential construction; for example, MIT cannot build more than 1 million total square feet on the site until it erects 100 housing units.
- Ceilings set at 1.9 million square feet for non-residential development and 400,000 square

(Please turn to page 2)

"Tent City" protesters go to court

By Thomas T. Huang

As the trial for nine protesters arrested at Tent City on Nov. 20 got underway in Cambridge District Court last Friday, the prosecution and defense heard the testimony of MIT Campus Police officers and clashed over a legal question: By allowing the protesters to occupy a plot of land on the Simplex site for more than a month without telling them they would be evicted, had the Institute given the protesters its "apparent consent" to stay on MIT property?

If so, then the protesters received a "license" on the land, the defense lawyers claimed. They argued that the police should have — but had not — given the protesters "a reasonable amount of time" to pack up their belongings and to leave the site. Kurt Pressman, one of the defense attorneys, said during the trial: "This was not a civil disobedience action. The people were trying to leave when they were arrested."

But even if the protesters had a license on the land, MIT, as owner of the land, had the legal right to revoke it, according to Assistant District Attorney Donna Crosby, who is prosecuting the case. Crosby claimed that she had shown through police testimony that the defendants had been trespassing on MIT property and had been on the site when the warning of arrest was given.

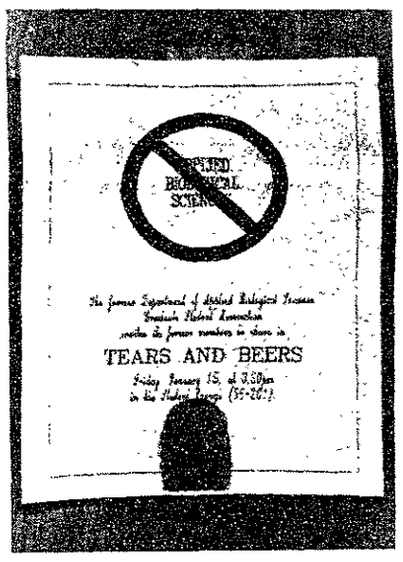
Campus Police officers — called to the stand by the prosecution — maintained that they had given the protesters 20 minutes to pack up. They said that the defendants had refused to leave the site, even though the protesters had been given adequate warning before their arrests. The officers also claimed that two of those arrested — Steven D. Penn G and Stephen Fernandez, a former MIT student — had asked their fellow protesters to stay put.

The prosecution rested its case last Friday, and the defense will call its witnesses when the trial continues next Friday.

Under administration orders to clear Tent City, the Campus Po-

(Please turn to page 14)

MIT eliminates applied biology dept.



David M. Watson/The Tech
Sign near Course 20 lab area

By Niraj S. Desai and Michael Gojer

The department of applied biological sciences — Course 20 — will be "phased out" over the next 18 months, according to Gene M. Brown, dean of the School of Science. The announcement was made to the department faculty at a special meeting on Jan. 6, according to the MIT News Office.

Brown is making efforts to place the 12 tenured professors in the department in other positions at the Institute, he said, adding that all contracts will be honored. The four non-tenured faculty will be considered on an individual basis, he said. Two other applied biology faculty hold their principal appointments in chemical engineering.

Brown told *The Tech* that the principal reason for ending the department was its lack of focus as a discipline.

Graduate students presently working in applied biology — some of whom have four or five years of study left — will be allowed to complete their programs, Brown said. Undergraduate courses offered by Course 20 faculty will continue to be offered next year, he said.

There was little or no discussion with department members before the decision was made, apparently, according to several faculty members *The Tech* reached yesterday. Department Head Gerald N. Wogan had no comment.

The applied biology department evolved from the department of food technology, which was formed in 1944 out of an outgrowth of the department of biology. In 1966 the department became the department of nutrition and food science.

Future of department has been considered for several years

Applied biology is a "very broad" area, Brown said in an interview, noting that its spectrum ranges from molecular biology and genetic engineering to chemical separation techniques. "To expect one department to embrace all those areas in what might be called 'biotechnology' . . . and to do it well . . . is almost impossible." Brown said he felt that applied biology was not a discipline in itself.

The department was made aware several times in the last few years of the problem of focus, Brown said. "There's been talk for several years, from time to time, about whether to keep the department going." "It was certainly on the mind of my predecessor [now Provost John M. Deutch '61] in this position." In the past few years, the applied biology faculty has concentrated in the areas of toxicology and biochemical engineering, according to Brown. Brown said that biochemical engineering began to receive less attention within the department when two faculty members changed their appointments to chemical engineering. Though Brown said the toxicology group was excellent, the other faculty were diverse in their interests. "It became clear that one or two people did not make a program," he said.

(Please turn to page 12)

Early action applications to MIT fall 12 percent

By Susan Seung-Eun Lee

This year's crop of early decision applicants was 12 percent smaller than last year's, but the regular application process should be highly competitive, according to Michael C. Behnke, director of admissions. The admissions office received 19 percent more application inquiries this year than last, he said.

Three-hundred and sixty-one out of 1249 early applicants for the Class of 1992 were admitted, he said.

Twenty-three percent of the early applicants showed interest in majoring in electrical engineering and computer science, compared to 30 percent of last year's pool.

Behnke attributed the overall decrease in early applicants partly to a November College Board test date that was a week later than last year's, resulting in some

(Please turn to page 11)

Economists debate harm of defense spending on US economy



Mauricio Roman/The Tech
Dr. Lawrence Summers

By Niraj S. Desai

Is the defense establishment a dangerous sponge, draining off the human and physical resources that could be put to better use by the civilian economy?

That question provoked a heated debate yesterday between Seymour Melman of Columbia University and Harvard's Lawrence Summers. The panel discussion on the state of the US economy was moderated by Paul A. Samuelson, Institute professor emeritus of economics.

"The United States is no longer a first-rate industrial economy," Melman declared. To meet such a definition, an economy must grow and use research and development effectively while possessing a rising standard of living and an industrial infrastructure capable of producing needed machinery and consumer items.

Until the 1970s, the United States had a first-class economy. But it has slipped dangerously in recent years, Melman warned. Rather than rewarding industrial efficiency, the economy has tolerated deleterious cost-maximizing, Melman said.

As proof, Melman pointed out that the prices of machinery used by US industry increased by 82 percent from 1975-84. Over a similar period, Japanese machinery prices rose by only 7 percent. Japanese managers are encouraged to utilize cost-effective technology, Melman argued.

The epitome of the wastefulness in the American system is the defense establishment, Melman said. And that establishment has been allowed to consume an overly large share of American resources.

For every $100 spent on civilian fixed capital formation, the United States spends $40 on the military. In comparison, West Germany spends $13 per $100, while Japan spends only $3 per $100.

This emphasis on military expenditures has crippled the rest of American industry, Melman said. Lacking proper funding and human talent, US industries are not able to compete with foreign firms in many markets important to American consumers. Defense spending is of limited value in

(Please turn to page 14)



Mauricio Roman/The Tech
Dr. Seymour Melman